

**ECONOMIC AFFAIRS IC
JANUARY 20, 2012
Exhibit 9**

To: HB 525 Interim Committee

Fm: William A. Spoja, Jr., Central Montana Crematorium, Inc. Lewistown, MT

Re: Board of Funeral Service

I regret that I am unable present this statement in person, but weather and health issues make that inappropriate at this time. I am asking Mr. James Axelson to represent me if that become proper in his view. I have also sent the below statement to Ms. Murdo so that you have a copy delivered directly from me.

MATTERS TO BE CONSIDERED TO MEET THE NEEDS OF MONTANANS

1. I ask the committee to take into account the statement I delivered to it on October 6, 2011. I will not use your time to repeat it here
2. I would caution the legislature against increasing the budget of the Board of Funeral Service. It is my personal experience that they have wasted incredible amounts of money bringing unfounded charges, the sole purpose of which appear to be protecting the entrenched competitive positions of the mortician portion of the death industry in Montana, at the expense of the common people of this state who clearly are desiring cremation as a preferred option for their death care plans.

I have personally been required to spend in excess of \$25,000 defending mortician engendered, meritless cases all of which were dismissed. As an attorney, I have been able to do most of my own legal work in these matters. I can only surmise how much money has been wasted by this board in such inappropriate activities.

3. I believe that the best thing the legislature might do with the funeral board is to re-constitute the board so that it can no longer IGNORE the needs of the citizens of Montana while protecting the interests of funeral homes and morticians.

My suggestion: That the board NO LONGER have three morticians, thus giving that profession total control of the board. If there were two morticians, two independent cremation operators, two cemetery operators and the present public member. No profession would control the entire process. The board would no longer serve as the entity which serves to

protect the mortuary industry over the interests of the people of Montana. It is absolutely wrong to leave that board in a position where it almost automatically ignores the true interest of our Montana people. Perhaps there should be more public members. After all, it is the public we should all be trying to protect here.